



TO: District Superintendents  
Superintendents of Schools  
Public School Administrators  
Charter School Administrators

Date: September 23, 2020

From: Marybeth Casey, Assistant Commissioner  
Curriculum Instruction and Early Learning

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marybeth Casey".

Re: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on School Reopening Regarding  
Teaching and Learning

The New York State Education Department's (NYSED) Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Early Learning (CIEL) has compiled the following answers to questions collected from the field regarding NYSED's July 2020 School [Reopening Guidance](#): Recovering, Rebuilding and Renewing the Spirit of New York's Schools ("reopening guidance").

- [Scheduling](#)
- [Unit of Study/Instruction/Unit of Credit](#)
- [Academic Intervention Services](#)
- [Arts](#)
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- [Science Labs](#)
- [CTE](#)

## Scheduling

- Q1. What flexibility exists for scheduling a combination of in-person and remote (hybrid) learning for schools?
- A. Under the reopening guidance, all schools must provide 180 days of instruction each school year to their students. Instructional days shall be counted for programs that are delivered in-person, remotely, or through a hybrid model. School districts determine their local schedules based on need.

If a school determines that their students are best served by a fully remote schedule, a rotating in-person schedule, combined with remote learning or a fully in person schedule, this is allowable under the guidance as long as the 180 days of instruction is adhered to, the plan for instruction is in the best interest of the students, and it includes regular and substantive interaction with an appropriately certified teacher regardless of the delivery method (e.g., in person, remote or hybrid).

### **Unit of Study/Instruction/Credit Requirements**

Q2. The summary of the reopening guidance cites flexibility with the 180 minutes per week Unit

Instructional experiences *may* include, but are not limited to:

- completing online modules or tasks;
- viewing instructional videos;
- responding to posts or instructor questions;
- engaging with other class participants in an online or phone discussion;
- conducting research;
- doing projects; or
- meeting with an instructor face to face, via an online platform, or by phone.

Q4. The reopening guidance states, “Any alternative instructional experience must include meaningful feedback on student assignments and methods of tracking student engagement.” How can educators provide meaningful feedback when they’re not engaged in in-person instruction?

A. Meaningful feedback can be provided whether students are engaged in in-person, remote, or hybrid (combination of in-person and remote) instruction.

aligned to the commencement level standards in alternative modalities, the instructional priority should be to prepare students to meet the learning outcomes for the course. It is required that students have substantive interaction with a certified teacher so that their learning is supported. Actual time spent to meet the learning outcomes may vary by student. Any student who achieves the learning outcomes for the course must be granted the unit of credit for such course, if applicable.

Q7. What should be considered when designing quality remote instruction?

- A. Remote instruction must be thoughtfully and strategically designed and will vary based upon available resources, and both student and teacher access to technological tools and connectivity. When designing the instruction that will be delivered remotely, schools should strive to provide an educational program that is comparable to that which students would have received if they were in attendance at the school building. The following questions should be considered when designing remote instruction:
- Is the remote instruction standards-based?
    - o Are all instruction, curriculum materials, assignments and projects based on the NYS learning standards?
  - Is the remote instruction student-centered and differentiated to meet individual students' needs?
    - o

- o Do teachers provide and allow time for reflective questioning during live discussion groups?

Additional information on Unit of Study flexibilities and Units of Credit can be referenced on pages 97-98 of the NYSED's [Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York's Schools – Reopening Guidance](#).

### Academic Intervention Services (AIS)

Q8. How will schools determine which students are eligible for Academic Intervention Services (AIS) when the 3-8 State Assessments and the Regents examinations were cancelled for the 2019-2020 school year?

- A. Districts shall use a district developed procedure, to be applied uniformly at each grade level, for determining which students are entitled to such services. Districts may consider students' scores on multiple measures of student performance, which include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following measures:

- Developmental reading assessments;
- Benchmark and lesson embedded assessments;
- Common formative assessments;
- Unit and lesson assessments;
- Results of psychoeducational evaluations; and
- Diagnostic screening for vision, hearing, and physical disabilities as well as screening for possible disabilities pursuant to Commissioner's Regulations Part 117.

### Arts

Q9. My district is changing course offerings at the middle and high school levels. What if schools and/or districts decide not to offer certain courses because of social distancing requirements or funding constraints?

- A. Decisions pertaining to course offerings are determined at the local level per the [Powers and duties of Boards of Education](#) (Ed Law §1709[3]). Note, however, that there have been no regulatory changes to the program requirements at the elementary, middle or high school level. Reference:

- [Program requirements for grades 5 through 8](#) (Commissioner's Regulations §100.4(c));
- [Diploma Requirements](#) (Commissioner's Regulations §100.5(a) and (f)); and
- [General School Requirements](#) (Commissioner's Regulations §100.2(h))

Q10. How can I continue teaching music classes, such as band and chorus, that require social distancing of twelve feet in all directions if my school does not have the necessary space available?

- A. Classes such as band or chorus may be taught outside or redeveloped as small group or virtual experiences. Singing and wind instruments bring the highest risk; consider using other instruments (following [sanitation](#) protocols), and having students record and share their performances. Individualize instruction so that students may continue practicing their musical skills at home or during remote learning. Students could be given a virtual partner from within the school/district who is learning their instrument or vocals to practice with virtually.

Additional information on inclusion of the Arts in reopening plans can be referenced on pages 99-101 of the NYSED's [Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York's Schools – Reopening Guidance](#).

## Physical Education

additional information on instructional experiences, reference question 3 of this FAQ.

While schools should consider the time requirement of instruction/week as a benchmark for comparison when designing and delivering instruction aligned to the commencement level standards, the instructional priority should be to prepare students to meet the learning outcomes for the course.

Additional information on the inclusion of physical education in reopening plans can be referenced on pages 101-103

extent to which changes may be needed for each interscholastic sports season. For additional information, reference [NYSPHSAA's webpage](#)

### **Science/Laboratory Requirements**

Q14. What experiences can fulfill the laboratory requirements during the 2020-



i.e., ServSafe) that involve cleaning, sanitation and safety? (Ref: NYS Guidance Document, page 43: "...students will not be present when disinfectants are in use and should not participate in cleaning and/or disinfection activities....")

- A. CTE programs are allowed to continue to incorporate the sanitation and safety curriculum required of the program, and based on industry standards, that involve cleaning, sanitation, and safety. The reference cited, NYSED Reopening Guidance, page 43, focuses on school districts'/buildings' cleaning protocols. If students are participating in CTE programs where cleaning and disinfection are skills being monitored and assessed (in some situations leading to credentials/certifications) within the context of curriculum, then schools/districts should continue to offer these opportunities to students under the supervision of appropriately certified staff and while adhering to all state and federal health and safety guidelines.

Additional information on science laboratory requirements can be referenced on pages 98-99 of the NYSED's [Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York's Schools – Reopening Guidance](#).